

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A system for facilitating electronic commerce among users, a service provider and vendors, wherein each user has established a primary account with the service provider, the system comprising:

    a plurality of vendor computers, each vendor computer programmed to provide a website at which a user at a user device may purchase goods or services;

    a service provider computer at which the user has established a primary account, the service provider computer programmed to permit the user to establish a sub-account under the primary account, wherein the user may specify a subset of the plurality of vendor computers from which purchases may be made using the sub-account; and

    a communications network enabling the user device to communicate with the plurality of vendor computers.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to permit the user of the primary account to transfer funds to the sub-account from the primary account, a credit card or a bank transfer.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to permit the user to specify a plurality of authorized users for the sub-account.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to permit the user to specify a spending limit for the sub-account.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to permit the user to authorize the sub-account to establish a further sub-account subordinate to the sub-account.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to permit the user to authorize the sub-account to independently add funds.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to permit a user of the sub-account to modify secured information of the sub-account.

8. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to permit the user to configure the sub-account to automatically add funds to the sub-account during a transaction if a balance of the sub-account falls below a minimum balance.

9. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to send a notification to the user of the primary account on a periodic basis, wherein the notification lists all transactions of the sub-account.

10. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to send a notification to the user of the primary account on a transaction-specific basis.

11. The system of claim 1 wherein the service provider computer is programmed to send a notification to the user of the primary account, the notification

including a link that the user may activate to lock the sub-account.

12. A method for a service provider to facilitate electronic commerce among users, the service provider and vendors, wherein each user has established a primary account with the service provider, the method comprising:

providing a website with which a plurality of vendor may register to sell goods and services to registered users of the service provider, each vendor having a website at which users may identify items for purchase;

providing to the user of the primary account an interface to a service provider computer at which the user may establish a sub-account under the primary account, the user specifying a subset of the plurality of vendors from which purchases may be made using the sub-account.

13. The method of claim 12 further comprising enabling the user of the primary account to transfer funds to the sub-account from the primary account, a credit card or a bank transfer.

14. The method of claim 12 further comprising enabling the user to specify a plurality of authorized users for the sub-account.

15. The method of claim 12 further comprising enabling the user to specify a spending limit for the sub-account.

16. The method of claim 12 further comprising enabling the user to authorize the sub-account to establish a further sub-account subordinate to the sub-account.

17. The method of claim 12 further comprising enabling the user to authorize the sub-account to independently add funds.

18. The method of claim 12 further comprising enabling a user of the sub-account to modify secured information for the sub-account.

19. The method of claim 12 further comprising enabling the user to configure the sub-account to automatically add funds to the sub-account during a transaction if a balance of the sub-account falls below a minimum balance.

20. The method of claim 12 further comprising sending a notification to the user of the primary account on a periodic basis, the notification listing all transactions of the sub-account.

21. The method of claim 12 further comprising sending a notification to the user of the primary account on a transaction-specific basis.

22. The method of claim 12 further comprising sending a notification to the user of the primary account, the notification including a link that the user may activate to lock the sub-account.

23. The method of claim 12 further comprising, after a purchase transaction is authorized, debiting the sub-account by the purchase price.

24. The method of claim 12 further comprising, after a purchase transaction is authorized, crediting a vendor account for the purchase price less any service charges payable to the service provider by the vendor.